

In the Claims

Please amend claims 12, 15, and 17 as set forth below. Claims 1-11, 13-14, and 16 are unchanged. Please add new claims 18-56 as set forth below.

- A2
1. (Unchanged) A process for accessing a virtual table comprising:
identifying a data source;
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, said virtual table having a different column signature than said record;
accessing said record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said record.
 2. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.
 3. (Unchanged) The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in said record.
 4. (Unchanged) The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located external to said record.
 5. (Unchanged) The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in a second virtual table.
 6. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 in which said data source is a database table.
 7. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 in which said data source is an operating system file.
 8. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.
 9. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
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associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
accessing said second record; and ~~B~~
logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

Sub. B1 } 10. (Unchanged) The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.

11. (Unchanged) The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record populates a second row in said virtual table.

Sub. B2 } 12. (Amended) The process of claim 1 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.

13. (Unchanged) The process of claim 1 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table.

14. (Unchanged) The process of claim 13 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a SQL arithmetic operation.

Sub. B3 } 15. (Amended) The process of claim 13 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.

16. (Unchanged) The process of claim 15 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a database join operation.

17. (Amended) A computer program product that includes a medium usable by a processor, the medium having stored thereon a sequence of instructions which, when executed by said processor, causes said processor to execute a process for accessing a virtual table, said process comprising:

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identifying a data source;
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, said virtual table having a different column signature than said record;
accessing said record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said record.

18. (New) The computer program product of claim 17 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.

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19. (New) The computer program product of claim 17 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table. B

20. (New) The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

Sub B4
21. ~~(New) The computer program product of claim 20 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.~~

22. ~~(New) The computer program product of claim 17 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.~~

23. ~~(New) The computer program product of claim 17 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table.~~

Sub B5
24. ~~(New) The computer program product of claim 23 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;
accessing said second record; and~~

~~logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.~~

AB 25. (New) A system for accessing a virtual table comprising:
means for identifying a data source;
means for associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, said virtual table having a different column signature than said record;
means for accessing said record; and
means for logically populating said virtual table with said record.

26. (New) The system of claim 25 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record. B

27. (New) The system of claim 25 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.

28. (New) The system of claim 25 further comprising:
means for identifying a second data source;
means for associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
means for accessing said second record; and
means for logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

Sub. B6 29. (New) The system of claim 28 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.

30. (New) The system of claim 25 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.

31. (New) The system of claim 25 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table. B

Sub. B7 32. (New) The system of claim 31 further comprising:
means for identifying a second data source;

cl means for associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;

means for accessing said second record; and

means for logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.

AB 33. (New) A method for accessing a virtual table comprising:
identifying a data source;
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, wherein said virtual table is not defined with database metadata;
accessing said record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said record.

34. (New) The method of claim 33 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.

35. (New) The method of claim 33 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.

36. (New) The method of claim 33 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

37. (New) The method of claim 36 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.

38. (New) The method of claim 33 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.

39. (New) The method of claim 33 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table.

40. (New) The method of claim 39 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.

41. (New) A computer program product that includes a medium usable by a processor, the medium having stored thereon a sequence of instructions which, when executed by said processor, causes said processor to execute a method for accessing a virtual table, said method comprising:
identifying a data source;
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, wherein said virtual table is not defined with database metadata;
accessing said record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said record.

42. (New) The computer program product of claim 41 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.

43. (New) The computer program product of claim 41 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.

44. (New) The computer program product of claim 41 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

45. (New) The computer program product of claim 44 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.
46. (New) The computer program product of claim 41 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.
47. (New) The computer program product of claim 41 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table.
48. (New) The computer program product of claim 47 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.
49. (New) A system for accessing a virtual table comprising:
means for identifying a data source;
means for associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, wherein said virtual table is not defined with database metadata;
means for accessing said record; and
means for logically populating said virtual table with said record.
50. (New) The system of claim 49 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.
51. (New) The system of claim 49 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.
52. (New) The system of claim 49 further comprising:
means for identifying a second data source;
means for associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;

means for accessing said second record; and
means for logically populating said virtual table with said second record.

c1 53. (New) The system of claim 52 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.

AB 54. (New) The system of claim 49 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns are used to populate a single column in said virtual table.

55. (New) The system of claim 49 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against said virtual table.

56. (New) The system of claim 55 further comprising:
means for identifying a second data source;
means for associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;
means for accessing said second record; and
means for logically populating said second virtual table with said second record, wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.